

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, NU
SUBJECT: ENCOURAGING FREE ELECTIONS AND OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS IN NICA-
RAGUA

REF: A. MANAGA 2327; B. STATE 121955

1. DURING CORDIAL TWO-HOUR FAREWELL VISIT WITH PRESIDENT SOMOZA AT EL RETIRO THIS EVENING (JUNE 7) WE AGAIN STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE THAT PRESIDENT CARTER ATTACHES TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY. WE TOLD THE PRESIDENT THAT FREE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS IN NICARAGUA IN 1978 IN PREPARATION FOR PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN 1981 WOULD BE VIEWED WITH FAVOR BY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT, THE U.S. CONGRESS AND AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION. IT WOULD HELP US TO MAINTAIN AND STRENGTHEN OUR COOPERATIVE RELATONSHIP WITH THE GON.

2. WE POINTED OUT TO THE PRESIDENT THAT LIFTING THE STATE OF SIEGE AND CENSORSHIP WOULD BE TAKEN BY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT AS A POSITIVE STEP TOWARDS ENLARGING THE FREEDOM OF THE POLITICAL OPPO-
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SITION TO ENGAGE IN LEGITIMATE ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN ACTIVITY IN PREPARATION FOR THE NUMICIPAL AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. IT WOULD ALSO UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE AN AMELIOIRATIVE IMPACT ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION MORE GENERALLY TO THE BENEFIT OF OUR MUTUAL RELATIONS. WE ALSO CONVEYED TO SOMOZA ONCE AGAIN OUR INTEREST IN ANY EVIDENCE THAT THE NATIONAL GUARD HAS SUBSTANTIALLY MODERATED ITS CONDCUT. WE EXPLAINED THAT A SIGNIFICANT DECLINE OR TERMINATION OF ALLEGA-

TIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES BY THE NATIONAL GUARD WOULD LEAD TO AN IMPROVEMENT IN OUR RELATIONS AND HAVE A FAVORABLE IMPACT ON THE U.S. CONGRESS AND AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION.

3. PRESIDENT SOMOZA SAID THAT HE FULLY UNDERSTOOD AND SYMPATHIZED WITH THE U.S. POSITION ON HUMAN RIGHTS SINCE WE HAVE DISCUSSED THE MATTER EXHAUSTIVELY. WITH RESEPCT TO THE STATE OF SIEGE, SOMOZA AGAIN ASSERTED THAT HE WAS AWAITING THE SUPREME COURT ACTION ON PENDING MILITARY COURT APPEALS. HE WAS HOPING TO GET QUICKER ACTION ON THE APPEALS SO THAT HE COULD TAKE ACTION AND TERMINATE THE STATE OF SIEGE. HE LEFT THE IMPRESSION THAT HE STILL HOPED IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE THIS MONTH.

4. SOMOZA DECLARED THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT'S BILATERAL HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY NOT ONLY CREATED GREAT STRAINS AND TENSIONS IN ITS RELATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES BUT ALSO UNWITTINGLY CONTRIBUTED TO REVOLUTIONARY VIOLENCE AND BLOODSHED. HE ARGUED THAT THE VIOLENT REVOLUTIONARIES SAW THE HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO WEAKEN U.S. RELATIONS WITH THE LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES. THEY KNEW THAT IF THEY ATTACKED LOCAL POLICE OR MILITARY FORCES THAT ANY FORCEFUL RESPONSE BY GOVERNMENTS TO MAINTAIN ORDER WOULD CREATE AN OUTCRY BY THE REVOLUTIONARIES AND THEIR CIVILIAN ALLIES AND LEAD TO CHARGES OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES WHICH WOULD RECEIVE A RESPECTFUL HEARING IN THE U.S. CONGRESS AND IN THE ADMINISTRATION. BY PROVOKING GOVERNMENT REACTION, IT IS NOW POSSIBLE FOR REVOLUTIONARY GROUPS HOSTILE TO THE UNITED STATES UT USE THE ADMINISTRATION'S HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY TO DAMAGE U.S. RELATIONS WITH THE COUNTRY CONCERNED. SOMOZA SAID THAT THIS WAS A DANGEROUS DEVELOPMENT THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT SHOULD WATCH CAREFULLY.

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5. THE PRESIDENT REPEATED HIS DEEP CONCERN OVER THE DEPARTMENT'S REFUSAL TO PERMIT THE SALE OF ARMS AND AMMUNITION TO NICARAGUA FOR COMMERCIAL PURPOSES. HE SAID THAT HE WOULD CONTINUE TO CHARACTERIZE THIS LIMITATION ON SALES FOR COMMERCIAL ENDS AS A QUOTE HOSTILE ACT UNQUOTE UNTIL THE POLICY IS CHANGED. HE ASKED ME TO CONVEY HIS ALARM AND DISPLEASURE OVER THIS POLICY TO SECRETARY VANCE AND PRESIDENT CARTER. WE INFORMED SOMOZA THAT THE POLICY WAS STILL UNDER REVIEW WITHIN OUR GOVERNMENT AND THAT WE EXPECTED IT TO BE CLARIFIED SOON. HE WOULD BE IMMEDIATELY APPRISED OF THE DECISION ON THIS MATTER. SOMOZA SAID THAT HE DOUBTED THAT HE COULD TRUST THE UNITED STATES AS A RELIABLE SUPPLIER OF EVEN SMALL ARMS AND AMMUNITION. HE TOLD ME THAT HE HAD RECEIVED AN OFFER OF M-16 AMMUNITION FROM ANOTHER HEAD OF STATE, WHO CALLED HIM PERSONALLYLTO MAKE THE OFFER, ABOUT A MONTH AGO. SOMOZA SAID THAT HE ACCEPTED, BOUGHT A SUBSTANTIAL QUANTITY, AND TOOK DELIVERY ABOUT THREE WEKKS AGO.

6. WE ENDED THE CONVERSATION BY REMARKING TO SOMOZA THAT THE U.S.

GOVERNMENT WANTED TO MAINTAIN FRIENDLY AND COOPERATIVE RELATIONS WITH HIS GOVERNMENT BUT THAT IT WOULD BE INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO DO SO UNLESS SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS WAS MADE BY THE GON IN IMPROVING THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN NICARAGUA. LIFTING THE STATE OF SIEGE AT ONCE, WE SAID, WOULD BE A VERY IMPORTANT STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. THE PRESIDENT REPLIED THAT THE U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY, HOWEVER WELL INTENTIONED, WAS DESTRUCTIVE OF CLOSE, COOPERATIVE RELATIONS. ONCE RELATIONS ARE ESTRANGED, HE ARGUED, THEY COULD NOT BE SO EASILY REPAIRED. TRUST AND CONFIDENCE BETWEEN COUNTRIES BUILT UP OVER A LONG PERIOD CAN BE IRREPARABLY DAMAGED BY A BILATERAL HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY. SOMOZA SAID THAT IT WAS IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE UNITED STATES TO DEAL WITH HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN MULTI-LATERAL CHANNELS AND NOT BILATERALLY.

7. COMMENT: THE PRESIDENT WAS IN A FRIENDLY, CORDIAL MOOD. NEVERTHELESS, HE REVEALED A DEEP SUSPICION OF THE DEPARTMENT, OF U.S. INTENTIONS TOWARDS NICARAGUA, AND SOME BAFFLEMENT OVER THE EVOLUTION
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OF U.S. POLICY. HE POINTED TO THE FREQUENT STATEMENTS OF THE U.S. AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED NATIONS AS ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE UNPREDICTABLE AND CONFUSING NATURE OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY. HE SAID THAT THE AMBASSADOR'S VIEWS SHOWED A NAIVE VIEW OF THE WORLD, AND HAD CREATED FURTHER UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE DIRECTION OF U.S. POLICY. HE WAS CLEARLY FEARFUL THAT THERE MIGHT BE SOME HIDDEN AGENDA IN U.S. POLICY TOWARDS HIS GOVERNMENT. HE IS DETERMINED TO MOVE CAUTIOUSLY IN HIS RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES, HOPING FOR A CHANGE IN THE CLIMATE OF U.S. OPINION BUT EXPECTING THE WORST.
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